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3. LEOPARD (*PANTHERA PARDUS*) ATTEMPTING TO PREY ON INDIAN GIANT SQUIRREL (*RATUFA INDICA CENTRALIS*)

It was the morning of 5th June, 1995 at Satpura National Park (MP) when my driver suddenly halted our van on seeing a huge bamboo rhizome off the road. As we descended from the vehicle to examine the rhizome we heard the alarm call of a giant squirrel (*Ratufa indica centralis*) from a distance of about 20 m. Following the direction of the very loud call, we spotted the squirrel on the trunk of a huge *Adina cordifolia* tree, lying motionless and calling continuously. After a second appeared a leopard (*Panthera pardus*) from the other side of the tree. The leopard was balancing himself very gingerly on the tree trunk right behind the squirrel. The squirrel swiftly went to the other side of the tree with the leopard following it. This chase continued two more times around the tree. Finally, the squirrel took a bold leap forward and jumped on to an adjacent *Terminalia tomentosa* tree and then to the next tree and disappeared. The leopard did not pursue it further as he

jumped and vanished into the thick undergrowth below. Various predators seem to be a perpetual threat to giant squirrels. Raptorial attacks on giant squirrels have been reported earlier. Borges (1986) and Joshua and Johnsingh (1994) have reported black eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis perniger*) attempting to predate on the giant squirrel. Datta (1993) and I have also observed a crested hawk eagle (*Spizaetus cirrhatus cirrhatus*) trying to attack a giant squirrel. Hutton (1949) had observed the Nilgiri marten *Charronia gwatkinsi* (Horsfield) feeding on giant squirrel. Leopards are known to be opportunistic feeders and occasionally feed upon arboreal prey such as langurs, but the giant squirrel does not seem to be such an easy prey.

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PRACHI MEHTA
Senior Research Fellow,
Wildlife Institute of India, Post Box 18,
Chandrabani, Dehra Dun-248 001.

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4. OCCURRENCE OF THE BROWN PALM CIVET IN THE WET FOREST OF KALAKAD MUNDANTHURAI TIGER RESERVE, TAMIL NADU

The Western Ghats harbour many rare and endemic fauna. However, distribution, status and ecology of many of them remain unclear. In this note, the occurrence and status of the brown palm civet (*Paradoxurus jerdoni*) in the evergreen forest of Kakachi (c. 1250m) in the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of south India is discussed.

The brown palm civet (*Paradoxurus jerdoni*) is endemic to the Western Ghats and is an inhabitant of the high elevation forests (Jerdon, 1874). Though not considered as rare as the endangered Malabar civet (*Viverra civettina*), very little is known about its status or distribution in the Agasthyamalai region of the southern Western Ghats (Ashraf *et al.* 1993).

In the Kakachi-Upper Kodayar area of the KMTR, the brown palm civet appears to be fairly common. Over the six years (1990-1996) of our stay in Kodayar, we have sighted this animal more than ten times during the night and only twice during the day. Recently in April 1996, we sighted an individual in the canopy of the evergreen forest, basking in the sunshine at noon and later eating the flowers of *Cullenia exarillata* until late in the afternoon. This animal was lethargic even in our presence and was probably sick.

Our sightings of the civet have mostly been on or near flowering or fruiting trees during the night. They regularly feed on the flowers of

Cullenia exarillata and ripe fruits of *Elaeocarpus munronii* and *Palaquium ellipticum* whenever available and probably serve as an important seed disperser in this area.

The civets breed in this area in summer. A pair of new born young of this civet was found deep inside the forest at Kakachi in May 1992. We noticed the pups because of their yelping call. They were in the litter, blind and probably not more than a week old. There was no sign of injury, but unfortunately our attempts to rear them failed. Like the adults in the area, the pups also had a white tipped tail.

Being nocturnal and restricted to the dense forest of the evergreen and moist deciduous type, the brown palm civet has rarely been sighted. We observed that it is an important contributor to the dynamics of tree regeneration in the wet forest. Hence, continued protection of the species and its habitat is very essential.

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T. GANESH
29, Chetty Street,
Pondicherry 605 001.

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